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CHRISTIANITY

VINDICATED against

INFIDELITY:

A Second

CHARGE

Deliver'd to the

CLERGY

OF THE

Archdeaconry of *Middlesex*.

By DANIEL WATERLAND, D. D.

Archdeacon of *Middlesex*.

And Chaplain in Ordinary to His MAJESTY.

L O N D O N:

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REVEREND BRETHREN,



THE Growth of *Infidelity* has for two or three Years last past been more talk'd of than ever; and I am afraid, there has been too much occasion for it. Yet I am willing to believe, that the Advances supposed to have been lately made on that Side, carry a great deal more of Noise and Show in them, than of real Strength. *Deism* may perhaps have become fiercer or bolder

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than formerly ; and it may be owing, not so much to any additional Advantages it has really gain'd, as to the Disappointments it has met with.

If we look between 30 and 40 Years backwards, we shall find, that the Complaints of good Men then ran in very high and strong Terms. “ It is dreadful to think (says a noted “ Author of that time^a) what numbers of “ Men are poisoned by Infidel Principles. “ For——They begin to talk them in Shops “ and Stalls ; and the Cavils of *Spinoza* and “ *Hobbs* are grown common even to the Rab- “ ble.” What more déplorable could be said of us at this Day ? The like Complaints were made some time after, about 20 Years ago : “ That *Infidelity* had taken deep Root, had “ been cultivated with Care, had spread its “ Branches wide, shot up to an amazing “ Height, and brought forth Fruits in great “ abundance. The *Mosaic* Account of the “ Creation was represented as meer *Allegory* “ and *Fable* : The *Inspiration* of Holy Writ “ so explain'd as to amount to a denial of it ; “ The Authority of the present *Canon* of

^a Nicholls's *Conference with a Theist*, Pref. p. 5.

“ Scripture disputed ; the Spuriousness of se-
 “ veral Passages, and some Books of it, mote
 “ than insinuated ; *Priests*, without distinction,
 “ traduced as Imposers on the Credulity of
 “ Mankind ; and those Religious Ordinances
 “ which they were appointed to dispense, even
 “ the Chief of them, *Baptism* and the *Sup-*
 “ *per of the Lord*, spoken of with such a
 “ Degree of ungodly Mockery and insolent
 “ Scorn, as filled the Hearts of good Christians
 “ with Horror and Astonishment : Nay, *Re-*
 “ *ligion* it self, was, in some of the loose
 “ Writings, so described, as if it were no-
 “ thing but a melancholy *Frenzy*, and pious
 “ *Enthusiasm* ^b. Such were the Representa-
 tions made in those Days. Yet *Christianity*
 (God be thanked) has still kept up its Head,
 has reign'd triumphant all the Time ; and I
 trust will reign, and that the Gates of Hell
 shall not prevail against it.

I know not whether these licentious
 Principles were the proper Produce of our
 own Soil, or may not be rather said to have

^b *Representation of the present State of Religion by a Com-*
mittee of Convocation, A. D. 1711.

Compare An Enquiry into the Causes of the late Growth
of Infidelity, written in 1705.

been transplanted hither from Abroad^a; where, it is certain, they had taken Root and spread, for a hundred Years or more, before they met with any favourable Reception, or made any publick Figure in this grave and serious, and for the most part, well-disposed Kingdom. Mr. *Hobbes* has been reputed the first or principal Man that introduced them here, or however that openly and glaringly espoused them^b. And it is not unlikely that he imbibed his loose Principles in *France* and *Italy*, as he also composed his famed Pieces while residing in foreign Parts. *Deism* seems to have sprung up abroad about the Middle of the XVIth Century. A learned Foreigner takes Notice of the Rise of the Sect in his

^a “ It seems to have been brought over hither from some
“ of our neighbouring Countries, together with the rest of
“ our Fashions. *Enquiry into the Causes, &c.* p. 3.

^b Anglorum primus est (faxit Deus, sit ultimus) qui Impietatem palam ostentare ausus est. *Parker. Disputat. de Deo, p. 219.*

In the Account of the *Growth of Deism*, written in 1696, it is said: “ It is now three Years since you and I had a serious
“ Discourse concerning the Rise and Progress of *Deism*, which
“ is an Opinion of late Years crept into *England*, tho’ not so
“ widely spread here as in other Parts of *Europe*, p. 1.

The *Enquiry* dates the Growth of them from about the Year 1660. *Enquiry, &c.* p. 7.

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Time ; and he wrote in 1563. His Account of them is as follows: " There are several who profess to believe, that there is a certain *Deity*, or *God*, as the *Turks* and *Jews* do : But as for *Jesus Christ*, and all the Doctrine testified by the Evangelists and Apostles, they take them for Fables and Dreams.— They have entertained some Opinions concerning Religion, which are more extravagant than those of the *Turks*, or any other *Infidels*. I hear that some of this Band call themselves *Deists*, a new Word in opposition to that of *Atheists*.— These *Deists* of which we speak, ridicule all Religion; tho' they accommodate themselves to the Religion of those with whom they are obliged to live, out of *Complaisance*, or *Fear*. Some amongst them have a sort of Notion of the *Immortality* of the Soul : Others agree with the *Epicureans* in that, as well as on the Divine *Providence* with regard to Mankind. I am struck with Horror, when I think that there are such Monsters among those that bear the Name of Christians *." Thus far *Peter Viret* : For he is the Man that gives this Account of

* See Bayle's Dictionary in *Peter Viret*, p. 2973.

the modern *Deists*: And notwithstanding their complimenting themselves with a new plausible Name, he scruples not to call their System of Doctrine an execrable *Atheism*. Not intending, I presume, that they directly disowned the Being of a God (for he intimates the contrary) but that they did it *consequently*, or that they did as effectually undermine and destroy all the *Influences* of Religion, as if they had been profess'd *Atheists*: And so, in effect, their Doctrine amounted to the same Thing, but gave less Offence. What *Atheism* chiefly aims at, is to sit loose from *present* Restraints, and *future* Reckonings: And those two Purposes may be competently served by *Deism*^a, which is but

a " It is certain that *Infidelity*, as it is at present countenanced and maintained by those that would be called the *Free-thinkers* of the Age, does give as much Incouragement to Immorality as most *Libertines* either need or desire. *Atheism* indeed makes shorter work of it, and at one Blow cuts asunder all the Ties of Religion and Duty. But that is too bold a Step: It thwarts not only the common Principles of *Reason*, but even the general Bent and Inclination of human Nature. 'Tis an affront to good *Breeding* and *Civility*, as well as to good *Sense*, and common *Morality*: Whereas *Infidelity* will answer the Ends and Designs of *Libertinism* as well, but does it in a softer and a gentler way. For, there being no *Authentick* Body or System

but a more refined kind of *Atheism*. For, when a Man presumes to take God's Business out of his Hands, and, under the Name of *Reason*, prescribes both the *Laws* and the *Sanctions*, as his own Fancy or Inclination shall suggest; it is obvious to perceive, that God is as much excluded this way, from being *Lord over us*, as if his Existence were denied. And therefore, in this View, *Atheism* and *Deism* amount very nearly to the same Thing, having the same Effect in Application and Practice; for which Reason, some conclude Both under the same Name^b. The good

" System of the Laws of *Natural Religion*, every Man may
 " believe as much or as little of it as he thinks fit; He is left
 " to judge for himself how far the Obligation of its Duties
 " extends, and no doubt will find out some favourable Ex-
 " ceptions for his own darling Lusts and Vices. *Enquiry*
 " into the Cause, &c. p. 4.

" These loose Notions——first appeared abroad without any
 " *Disguise*, among those that set up for Wits of the Age,
 " who declared themselves avowed *Atheists*. This was too
 " gross to become popular, tho' it appeared too open and bare-
 " faced: But being not long after deserted as an indefensible
 " Cause, by some of its greatest Advocates, it daily lost ground,
 " and by degrees was modelled and new lick'd into that Shape
 " wherein it now appears, and passes current for *Deism*, tho'
 " little differing, in reality, from what it was before. *Ibid.* p. 7.

^b See *Gastrell's Boyle's Lecture-Sermons*, Vol. I. p. 251,
 252.

Man, before mentioned, was struck with Horror at the thought of there being such *Monsters* as he had described; Men bred up to *Christianity*, and acquainted also with *pure* and *reformed* Christianity. An Infidel under *Paganism*, might have something to plead from the *Impurities* allowed of in the Pagan Worship, and from the Mass of *Superstition* and *Imposture* under which the Remains of *true Religion* lay buried: But what colourable Excuse can any Person invent for his *Infidelity*, under the brightest Sun-shine of the Gospel? None certainly. For, to use the Words of a famous Writer, and no Bigot in the Cause, " Unless the *reigning Passion* of his " Soul, or some prodigious *Stupidity* obstructed, he must see, that embracing the " Gospel-profession is infinitely a more reasonable Choice than the way he is in^c." I know not how far an Affectation of *Singularity*, or an Ambition to be thought *wiser* than the rest of the World, may have carried some Persons. A few shining Characters in History, of any kind, have often drawn after them a considerable Number of very

^c Bayle's Miscellaneous Reflections on a Comet, Vol. II. p. 392.

unequal Imitators. There have been some extraordinary Geniusses, who, by correcting *vulgar Errors*, have acquired immense Reputation. This perhaps may have stirred up others to aim at the same Glory, by rejecting any thing *vulgar*, tho' ever so *true* and *right*: As if it were any Commendation to be singularly *Injudicious*; or as if, because it is honourable to *exceed* the common Standard, it were honourable likewise, only to *differ* from it, or *not to come up to it*; which is manifestly the Case of our modern *Deists*, however highly they may please to think of themselves. For they have not so *clear* a Discernment, not so *true* a Taste, nor so *correct* a Judgment (whatever the Reason be) as common Christians have. They have *proved* nothing of what they boast of, nor ever will: They have frequently discovered warm Inclinations to maintain their Principles, but have been as frequently disappointed. Take but away their Rhetorick and equivocal Expressions, their Misrepresentations and Misreports, their Ostentation and their Scurrilities; and their Cause will be left in a manner destitute. One *Ad-*

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vantage indeed they have over us, that they run the same way with corrupt Nature, and it is easy to drive down a Precipice, while it is hard to climb up an Ascent: On which account they can never fail to have their Disciples, such as they are; for *Epicurus* also before them, had his ^e. But then they have their *Disadvantages* also, in other respects, and those many and great; so that, upon the Whole, they will have the less reason to triumph. 1. For, in the first place, notwithstanding the *depravity* of human Nature, prone to listen to bad Counsels, there are yet (God be thanked) great Numbers of honest and conscientious Christians, who fear God, and reverence his Holy Word, and upon whom these new Teachers can make no Impressions at all, excepting only of Horror and Detestation. 2. Besides those, there may be other knowing and sensible Men, who, if they have less affection for Religion (being taken up with

^e *Epicuri* Disciplina multo celebrior semper fuit, quàm cæterorum: non quia *Veri* aliquod afferat, sed quia multos popolare nomen *voluptatis* invitat: Nemo enim non in vitia pronus est. Propterea, ut ad se Multitudinem contrahat, apposita singulis quibusque moribus loquitur. *Lactant.* lib. iii. c. 17. p. 145.

the World) will yet give no Countenance to *Infidelity*; either for fear of risking the Reputation of their *Judgment*, or for the Regard they bear to the Interests of *Society*, which can never subsist upon Infidel Principles. 3. Add to this, that there may be a great many more, who, tho' viciously given, will yet never be mad enough to run those desperate Lengths, so as to throw off all Regards to *revealed Religion*, and all Prospects of *Heaven*; but will rather chuse, for a time, *to hold the Truth in Unrighteousness*, reconciling themselves to it by the Hopes of *Repentance*, or by *Self-flattery*, or other delusive Expedients: It is as difficult almost, in a Country so enlightened as ours is, to be superlatively wicked (which a Man, generally speaking, must be to turn *Atheist*^f, or *Apostate*) as it is to be superlatively good. 4. Farther still, there may

f “ When a Man is come to that pass as to wish himself an *Atheist*, and make the last Efforts on Conscience, he is at “ the very *crisis* of Malice; a higher Degree is not incident “ to the human Soul: And unless God works Miracles to convert him, he sticks at no kind of Iniquity, altho' possibly he “ may not obtain his full Wish: So that such a one is incomparably farther removed from the way of Salvation, than “ an *Atheist* bred and born, or a simple Unbeliever”. *Bayle's Miscellan. Reflect. on a Comet*, p. 364. 365.

be several more, who, tho' delighted with loose and prophane Pamphlets, may yet have no real value or esteem for the Writers; as Men may love the Treason, while they dislike the Traytor. Many will despise the Man that shall undertake to defend in cold Blood, what They, with a kind of conscious Guilt and Shame, commit only in the Heat of Appetite or Passion. The patronizing *Infidelity* and *Irreligion*, which is patronizing all that's bad, will for ever be disreputable and odious Employment, in the general Opinion of Mankind^s; while Religion and Virtue, for their own intrinſick Worth, must always have crowds of *Admirers*, tho' perhaps few *Followers*.

For this reason, the Patrons of Irreligion and Infidelity in every Age, down from *Epicurus* to the present Times, have been forced in a great measure, to conceal their Sentiments, and to put on Disguises to the World; well knowing, that they can never hope to overturn Religion and Virtue, without pre-

^s Hence it was, that the wiser and better sort even of *Pagans* detested the *Epicureans*, as Debauchers of Manners, and the Bane of Youth, and a Scandal to the very Name of *Philosophy*. See *Suidas* in *Επιχρησμοις*, and *Athenæus*, l. xii. 547.

tending a Zeal for them all the Time. *Epicurus* himself could write as devoutly in favour of *Sanctity* and *divine Worship*, and of *Virtue* also, as any Believer could do, while he was really destroying them^h. In like manner, our modern *Deists* plead vehemently for *Morality*, that one might be tempted almost to think, that they were really in good earnest: But their rejecting the best and only compleat System of *Morality* that ever the World was blest'd with, and their taking *Morality* out of *God's* Hands into their *own*, in order to curtail and mutilate it; and above all, their sap-
ping the *Authority* which it properly stands upon, and their undermining the *Sanctions* which alone can ever keep it alive in the Worldⁱ; all these Circumstances too plainly show, that their Encomiums upon *Morality* are only magnificent Professions, like *Epicu-*

^h At etiam de *Sanctitate*, de *Pietate* adversus Deos, Libros scripsit *Epicurus*. At quomodo in his loquitur? Ut *Coruncanium*, aut *Scævolam*, Pontifices Maximos, te audire dicas; non eum qui sustulerit omnem funditus Religionem.——At etiam liber est *Epicuri*, de *Sanctitate*. Ludimur ab Homine non tam faceto, quam ad scribendi licentiam libero. Quæ enim potest esse *Sanctitas*, si Dî humana non curant? *Cicer. de Natur. Deor.* c. 41, 44. p. 100, 107. edit. Davies.

ⁱ See *Scripture-vindicated*, Part II. p. 134.

rus's Devotions, pompous Appearances solemn Show, or at the best, Sound without Sense. For the amount of all is, to *compliment* Virtue or Morality very highly, but to *starve* it at the same time, leaving it little or nothing to subsist upon. But without some such Colourings as these, they could never set up for Writers in a knowing Age, nor bear a part in Debate: The Readers would be shock'd * at once, upon the first sight of what they are doing; and the exposing their Principles to open View, would save their Adversaries the labour of a Confutation. So, it is not merely for the sake of guarding against legal Censure, that these Gentlemen so studiously affect *Disguises*, but

* This is as good as owned by some of them in their private Letters. " More Detriment than Advantage has been done to the Cause of *Deism* by an *open* profession of it.——
 " One Rule, I think indeed, ought always to be observed, that we should keep the Persons we have a Design upon, as long as possibly we can, from knowing that we our selves are of those Sentiments to which we would bring them.——
 " L——t has often talk'd to him against *Christianity*, but he was only *shock'd* at the Discourse: which confirms what I was saying before, that the way to convince a prejudiced Man, is not to let him know your own Sentiments, but draw him in first, before he knows where he is, 'till 'tis too late to step back. *Two Letters from a Deist to his Friend*, p. 2, 18, 20.

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it is to prevent, if possible, the *exposing* a bad Cause, which cannot bear the *Light*; and to lay in for Evasions and Subterfuges, for the carrying on a Dispute about their *Meaning*, when all besides is at an end. This however, is no small Difficulty in their way, to be thus constrain'd to act a Part; to write just plain enough to be understood, (for without that they do nothing) and yet not so plain as either fully to discover the whole Scene, or to foreclose all Retreat, or to leave no Colour for declaiming against hard Censures, when they come to be press'd. But by frequent Tryals, and long Experience, they have learned to manage with competent Dexterity.

They set out commonly, or conclude, with pompous Declarations of their more than ordinary concern for *Reason* and *Truth*; full of *Truth* in their Professions, to supply their want of it elsewhere: that now *seeking the Truth*, is almost become as much a Phrase amongst these Gentlemen, as *seeking the Lord* once was among another Set of Refiners. There is undoubtedly some Advantage to be gain'd in this way; otherwise it would never have been the common Pretext of all.

all *Detractors*¹ and *Deceivers* whatsoever: Neither would such Men as *Celsus* and *Hierocles*^m (sharp and subtle Disputants) have made use of it; neither could the Sect of the *Manichees* have ever imposed upon so *acute* a Man as *St. Austin*, tho' in his younger Days, by itⁿ. Nevertheless, it must be said, that *Boasting* is

¹ Prætexit quidem vir acutissimus præcipuum veritatis studium, cui nihil præferat, cui omnia submittat: Sed ignoscat mihi, si dixero, etiam *maledicentissimum* quemque illud præ se ferre, nec ullo alio unquam nomine suam velare obrectationem: Quid enim aliud dixerit *Zoilus* olim, Quid *Socratis* accusatores, Quid infames illi *delatores* sub Tyrannis, *Tiberio*, *Nerone*, *Domitiano*, quàm solo se veritatis & utilitatis publicæ studio duci ad alios ita palam increpandos & accusandos? *Perizon.* contra *Cleric.* in *Quint. Curt. Vindicat.* p. 13, 14.

^m The pompous Titles they gave to their Investives against the Christians, are well known, Both pretending a very particular Zeal for *Truth*.

ⁿ Quid enim me aliud cogebat annos ferè novem, spreta Religione quæ mihi puerulo parentibus insita erat, Homines illos sequi ac diligenter audire, nisi quod nos *Superstitione* terreri, & *Fidem* nobis ante *Rationem* imperari dicerent; se autem nullum premere ad *Fidem*, nisi prius discussâ & enodatâ *Veritate*. Quis non his pollicitationibus illiceretur, præsertim Adolescentis animus cupidus *Veri*, etiam nonnullorum in Schola Doctorum Hominum Disputationibus superbus & garrulus; qualem me tunc illi invenerunt, spernentem scilicet quasi aniles Fabulas, & ab eis promissum *apertum & sincerum verum* tenere atque haurire cupientem? *Augustin. de util. credendi.* Tom. viii. p. 46. Edit. Bened.

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no Argument of *Sincerity*, but is it self a *suspicious* Circumstance. *Honest* Men have no need to boast of their Integrity, while their Dealings abundantly declare it: Neither need *faithful* Writers tell of their uncommon Zeal for *Truth*, because an Author is proved by his Work, and it is good Manners to suppose, that a Reader has some Discernment.

Another very common Artifice, which those Gentlemen make use of, is, to usher in their Crudities under the Name and Umbrage of the *Men of Sense*. I cannot blame them for affecting to appear in good Company: But as they have no Commission for making so free with Persons of that Character, and as the whole amounts only to proclaiming *Themselves* considerable, which their Readers should be left to judge of; it seems to me, that such an Offence against Modesty, and Manners, is a stronger Argument against them, than any Self-commendations can ever be for them.

The same Gentlemen who take so much pains to recommend themselves as abounding in *Sense*, and *Reason*, and *Truth*, are as solicitous, on the other hand, to invent some *odious* Names for what they dislike. They never acquaint their Readers (tho' the more

ancient *Epicureans* were sometimes frank enough to do it ^o) that their Aim is to destroy *Religion* and *Conscience*, and the *Fear of God* ; but they give it out, their whole Quarrel is against *Credulity* or *Bigotry*, against *Superstition* or *Enthusiasm*, against *State-craft*, *Priest-craft*, or *Imposture* ; Names which they are pleased to affix, for the most part, to true Religion and Godliness. And when they have thus shifted off the Blame to others which belongs only to themselves, in order to blacken their Opposers, and to wash themselves white ; they then begin to play their Machinery upon the ignorant unguarded Readers. Now since their main Strength lies in their frequent Repetition of these ill-sounding Names, upon a Presumption that the World is more govern'd by *Names* than by *Things*, and that it is the easiest Thing in nature to carry on an imposture of *Words* ; I shall entreat your Patience while I endeavour to unravel the Mystery of those affected Names, considering them one by one, in the same order as I have mentioned them. And I hope to make it appear, that the guilt which

^o *Lucretius*, Lib. 1. 63, &c. with *Crescib's* Notes.

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those Gentlemen would load us with, is not *ours*, but *theirs* ; and that it ought therefore to be thrown back upon the Proprietors. This certainly is a very fair and equitable Method of Defence on our Side, to retort the Blame which belongs not to us, upon the Accusers themselves with whom it should rest.

I. I begin with *Credulity*, a kind of Cant-word (as they use it) and made to stand for a serious Belief of what *Moses* and the *Prophets*, of what *Christ* and his *Apostles* have taught us. It has been no new Thing for the most *credulous* Men imaginable to anticipate the charge of *Credulity*, fixing it upon others, in order to throw it off from themselves. It was remarkable in the *Pagans*, who were themselves all-over *Credulity*, that they assumed a bold Air, and fell foul upon the Christians as *credulous* Men. *Arnobius*, (besides many other of the Fathers) takes notice of it, and handsomely retorts it ^P. The *Manichees* also, who

^P Et quoniam ridere nostram *Fidem* consuevit, atque ipsam *Credulitatem* facetiis jocularibus lancinare ; dicite, o festivi, & meraco sapientiæ tincti, & satiri potû,—nonne vestram quicumque est, huic vel illi *credit* Auctoribus ? Non quod sibi persuaserit quis verum dici ab altero, velut quadam Fidei ad-

who were silly enough to *believe* that *God* and *Matter* were two *coeternal* Principles, that *Souls* were part of the divine Substance, and that *Sun* and *Moon* were to be adored (besides many other Points of Doctrines too ridiculous to bear the mentioning ⁹) even They had the Confidence to charge the Churches of *Christ* with *Credulity*, the better to cover their own Dotages. And now what shall we say to the same Charge revived against us by modern *Infidels*? As to the word *Credulity*, it denotes, according to its just and proper Acceptation, any *rash* or *wrong* Belief, taken up *against* Reason, or *without* Reason. If this be a true Explication of the Name (as it undoubtedly is) then I humbly conceive, that we stand clear of the Indictment; and that our Impeachers are themselves the Men whom they would feign us to be. I do not

stipulatione tutatur?—Cum igitur *comparti* nihil habeatis & *cogniti*, omniaque illa quæ scribitis & librorum comprehenditis millibus, *Credulitate* asseveretis duce, quænam hæc est judicatio tam injusta, ut nostram derideatis *Fidem*, quam vos habere conspiciatis nostra in credulitate communem? *Arnob. Lib. ii. p. 47, 48. Edit. Lugd.*

⁹ The English Reader may see the monstrous *Creed* of the *Manichees* briefly summed up in *Nye's Defence of the Canon of the New Testament*, p. 88. &c.

know any more *credulous* Men living, than they generally are. Indeed, we call them *Unbelievers*, because they believe not what they ought to believe; otherwise they are great *Believers* in their Way, and, for the most part, Men of a very large Faith. It cannot be pretended that they believe *less* than we, since our Creeds *reversed* (which usually makes theirs) are as long Creeds as before; like as traversing the same ground backwards measures the same number of Paces. He that believes, for Instance, that there is *no Heaven, no Hell, no future State, no Providence, no God*, is as much a *Believer*, in his way, as the most Religious Men can be in theirs. Infidels have their *Articles* of Belief as well as we, and perhaps more than we: So the Difference seems not to lie so much in the *Quantity* of Faith, theirs or ours, as in the *Quality*.

Bring we therefore this matter to a fair Issue, that it may be clearly seen which of the contending Parties are the *credulous* Believers. Let the Adversaries produce *Epicurus's* Creed, or *Hobbs's* * or *Spi-*

* *Hobbs's* Creed of Paradoxes, and palpable Absurdities, has been collected into one summary View by several Writers. See, among others, *Kortholtus*

Spinoza's ^s, or any other, fairly and fully drawn out, and let us compare. I am verily persuaded, that such their Creeds represented at full length, will be found to contain more and more frightful Articles, than the *Trent-Creed* it self, or even the *Mahometan*. A learned Foreigner has taken the Pains to digest one of the Infidel Creeds into three-and-twenty Articles ^t, eight of them *Negative*, and fifteen *Affirmative* : There is scarce an Article amongst

Kortholtus de Tribus Impostoribus, p. 93 ad p. 139.

Reimman. Histor. Atheismi, p. 444.

^s *Spinoza's* marvellous Creed may be seen, in a good measure, collected in

Kortholtus de Trib. Impostoribus, p. 139, ad p. 208.

Bayle's Dictionary, in the Article *Spinoza*.

^t SYMBOLUM FIDEI TOLANDICÆ.

Articuli Negantes.

1. *Nego* Spiritus incorporeos. 2. Mentem æternam & præstantissimam. 3. Providentiam numinis divini. 4. Immortalitatem Animæ humanæ. 5. Pœnas & præmia in vitâ futurâ. 6. Authentiam & divinæ Scripturæ originem. 7. Miracula *Mosis* & *Christi*. 8. *Mosem* fuisse Autorem Pentateuchi.

Articuli Affirmantes.

1. *Affirmo* mundum aut Naturam rerum esse solum numen, neque genitum neque interiturum. 2. Religionem esse pulchrum Politicorum commentum. 3. Atheismum esse naturalem notitiam & Sapientissimorum virorum Religionem. 4. Religionem vulgi esse Superstitionem. 5. Religionis Institutores & Sacrarum legum latores esse vafra & subdola Ingenia. 6. Omnium Religionum

amongst them but what is big with many and shocking Absurdities. By which it may appear, that those over-censorious Gentlemen do not want *Faith*, where they have *Inclination*; but while they strain out *Gnats*, can swallow *Camels*. They can readily assent to things more incredible or impossible than any to be met with in *Romance* or *Legend*: Indeed nothing is too absurd for their Belief, when they have a mind to it. They can believe, for Instance, that *Moses* (a wise Man by all accounts) could be weak enough to attempt the imposing a *Forgery*, and *Lying* History upon a whole Nation, endeavouring to persuade

Religionum Sacerdotes, & Sacrorum Myfteriorum Interpretes esse simulatæ pietatis vanos ostentatores, qui ex errore alieno quæstum faciunt. 7. Religionis Cultores & numinis cœlestis veneratores, esse ignavum & imbecille Hominum genus. 8. Quæcunque pro supernaturalibus habentur & in Deum vertuntur, esse res mere naturales. 9. Quæ pro miraculis venditantur & creduntur, esse Fraudes Impostorum, vel effecta morbi melancholici in Testibus qui ea viderunt vel audierunt. 10. Autographa veteris & novi Testamenti intercidiſſe. 11. *Mosè* & Scriptorem Pentateuchi fuiſſe *Pantheiſtas*; aut, ut recentiores loqui amant, *Spinoſiſtas*. 12. *Mosis* ſcripta explicanda & corrigenda eſſe ex exoticorum Libris. 13. Certiorem fidem adhibendam eſſe *Strabonis* diligentia, quam *Mosis*, uti pie creditur, Autoritati. 14. Atheum eſſe meliorem civem quàm Theiſtam. 15. Religionem Reipublicæ nocere. *Fayi Deſenſ. Religionis contra Joh. Toland*, p. 248, 249, 250.

them

them out of their Senses at once; and that he did not only attempt it, but succeeded in it too, and palm'd his Imposture upon all the People, none gainsaying it, nor discovering it; that the same Imposture had the good fortune to pass unsuspected upon the People of the *Jews* for many Ages, and came at length to be receiv'd even by *Christ* himself, who intirely confided in it, and staked all his Character upon it, where he says; *Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me, for he wrote of me: But if ye believe not his Writings, how shall ye believe my words* *?

But because the same Gentlemen, who make *Moses* an Impostor, must of consequence make *Christ* and his *Apostles* Impostors also, let us next observe, how *credulous* they appear to be in this Point too, as well as in the former. Not to mention a multitude of other Absurdities, They must believe “ that a despicable
“ Company of wilful Impostures and De-
“ ceivers, Men of a hated Nation and Re-
“ ligion, without Learning and Discipline,
“ without Skill and Experience, without any
“ of the Arts of pleasing and recommending

* John v. 46, 47.

themselves

“ themselves to Mankind, should run down all
 “ the Wit and Power and Policy of the World,
 “ and preaching a most despised and incredi-
 “ ble and seemingly ridiculous Doctrine, di-
 “ rectly contrary to all the worldly Interests
 “ and Humours of Men, to their Religion
 “ and Customs, and to their Reason and Phi-
 “ losophy too; should propagate the Belief of
 “ it far and wide thro’ the Earth, so that there
 “ was scarce a Nation in the whole compass of
 “ the Globe, but what, in whole or in part,
 “ received this *Fiction* as the most sacred
 “ Truth of God, and laid all the stress of their
 “ Salvation upon it *.”

I borrow this Representation from a very
 judicious Writer, and close Reasoner, who
 pursues the same turn of Thought a great
 way farther †, setting forth in the strongest
 and most lively colours, the numerous and in-
 tolerable Absurdities which *Infidels* must admit
 of; thereupon observing, very justly and per-
 tinently, that *their so much boasted Aversion to*
all kind of Bigotry and Credulity, is mere Jest
and Scene, and that they are either some of

* *Ditton* on the Resurrection of Christ, p. 363.

† *Ditton*, *ibid.* p. 364—371.

the most fondly credulous Persons in the World^z, or worse; *credulous to a Prodigy*, and might as well go on to the Fictions of a *Popish Legend*, or a *Turkish Alcoran*^a. These are the Men who are pleased to reproach the Church of *Christ* with *Easiness* of Belief, for believing *Mysteries*, and *Miracles*. It is true, we do believe *Mysteries*, few and well attested; while They believe many and palpable Absurdities^b. We admit *Miracles* also, assigning a Cause more than equal to the

^z *Ditton*, *ibid.* p. 374.

^a *Ditton*, *ibid.* p. 375.

^b Mr. *Bayle*, speaking of *Spinoza*, has some just Reflections, apposite to our present purpose, and worth the inserting.

“The most disdainful Censurers of other Mens Thoughts, are very indulgent to themselves. Doubtless he (*Spinoza*) derided the *Mystery* of the *Trinity*, and wondered that so many People could speak of a *Nature* terminated by *three Hypotheses*: And yet, properly speaking, he ascribed as many *Persons* to the *divine Nature*, as there are *Men* upon *Earth*.—*Spinoza* could not bear the least Obscurity of *Papism*, *Judaism*, or *Christianity*; and yet he heartily embraced an *Hypothesis* which reconciles two things so contrary to one another, as the *Square* and *Circular Figures*, and whereby an infinite number of *inconsistent* Attributes, and all the *Variety* and *Antipathy* of the Thoughts of *Man-kind* are true at the same time of *one* and the *same* most simple and indivisible Substance.” *Bayle* in *Spinoza*, 2791, 2792.

the Effect; while they are forced to admit the same Effects, or things more marvellous, independent of their proper or adequate Causes; which is admitting *Contradictions*. In short then, we believe what we can prove by good Authority, and no more: They believe what they please. Let them therefore first clear their own Accounts, and then proceed if they see proper, to charge the Churches of *Christ*, as such, with *Credulity*.

2. Another Party-word, and Term of Reproach, near akin to the former, is *Bigotry*: A Calumny thrown upon us, for our steadfast Adherence to *Moses* and the *Prophets*, to *Christ* and his *Apostles*, to God blessed for ever. In the mean while, to whom, or to

A celebrated Author has a Reflection of like kind, in the Words here following:

“ It must certainly be something else than *Incredulity* which
 “ fashions the Taste and Judgment of many Gentlemen,
 “ whom we hear censured as *Atheists*, for attempting to pli-
 “ losophize after a newer manner than has been known of
 “ late. For my own part, I have ever thought this sort
 “ of Men to be in general more *credulous*, tho’ after another
 “ manner, than the mere *Vulgar*. Besides what I have ob-
 “ served in Conversation merely, with the Men of this Cha-
 “ racter, I can produce many *anathematized* Authors, who
 “ if they want a true *Israelitish* Faith, can make amends by
 “ a *Chinese* or *Indian* one. *Characteristicks*, Vol. I. p. 345.

what do our Accusers adhere, that We should be *Bigots*, and not They? *Bigotry*, means in common Acceptation, a warm, or obstinate Adherence to Things or Persons, to Principles or Party, *against* Reason, or *without* Reason. By this Definition we desire to be tried, and to join Issue with our Adversaries: And let the indifferent World judge whether *Christians*, or *Infidels* are most properly *Bigots*.

The lower Class of *Unbelievers*, appear to have as tame and as implicate a Faith in their new Instructors, as it is possible for Men to have; that is, they are *bigotted* to them, and led blindfold by them. They believe every *Tale* that is but confidently told them, against Religion, or the Ministers of it: They accept of any *Sophistry* that is offered them, and submit to any Delusion or Imposition upon their Judgment and Understanding. They often take Dictates for Arguments, mere Assertions for Proofs, Equivocating for Reasoning, and Sound for Sense. While they are afraid of being *guided* by Priests, they consent to be *governed* by Anti-priests; who demand a much greater Submission from them than we can pretend to: For we are content and thankful, if our People will but observe us in what is
eye

evidently true and right, while they expect to be believed and followed in what is palpably false and wrong. From hence may appear the Bigotry of the inferior sort among the *Deists*.

As to the leading Men themselves, they generally follow the Track of their Predecessors, and appear to be zealous *Bigots* to their *Systems*, to their *Creeds*, to their *Paradoxes*, to their *Party* ; all which they adhere to, as pertinaciously as we can do to our *Bible*. They have *Pagan* Historians to rest their Faith upon, instead of *Moses* and the *Evangelists* ; they have *Pagan* Morals to answer to the divine Sermon on the Mount, and *Pagan* or *Jewish* Calumnies to set against our *Christian* Evidences. They have *Epicurus* and *Celsus*, *Porphyry* and *Julian*, for their Guides and Leaders in many things, as we have the *sacred* Writers in all. *Hobbs* and *Spinoza* seem to be their chief Instructors among the Moderns; and it has been observed by knowing Judges, that *Hobbs* himself was little more than a Disciple of *Epicurus* ^c, in his

^c Hoc probe scio, ipsum nihil nobis obtulisse nisi quod apud veteres in *Epicuro* reprehensum inveniamus. Ut enim *Epicurus* omnia a *Democrito* surripuisse dicitur, ita *Hobbius* omnia *Epicuri*

his System of Religion, or Irreligion. The like may be shown, and has been shown^d in some measure, of the present Advocates for Infidelity. Now indeed if they have reason for preferring those their Guides and Teachers to ours, then we are the *Bigots* : But if it has been manifested a thousand times over, as I presume it has, that the *Proofs* are on our side, and that it is impossible to come at any, as to the main Things, on theirs ; then we humbly conceive, that the *Bigotry* lies at their door, and we appeal from the Seat of Calumny to the Truth and Reason of Things. Let them show that they have as good Grounds for following the Doctrines of *Epicurus*, or any other ancient or modern Infidel, as we have for following *Christ*. Such was the Challenge which *Arnobius* long ago made to the *Pagans*, who presumed to oppose their *Philosophers* to *Christ* and his A-

Epicuri flagitia ingenti fastu tanquam sua recudit ; atque ut nova videantur, novis nominibus (quorum Ille, ut sunt novatores omnes, egregius Artifex) appellare affectavit. Parker Disputat. de Deo, p. 86.

^d Scripture-vindicated, Part ii. p. 136. &c.

postles :

postles^e: And such we make to every Unbeliever at this Day. Perhaps they will say, that they follow no ones Authority implicitly or absolutely, but collect from all what they like best. This might shew they are no Bigots to mere *human* Authority; neither are We: But then they may be Bigots to their own *Passions*, or *Prejudices*, or *Party*, in rejecting *divine* Authority sufficiently attested; while there is no *Bigotry* in submitting to the *highest Reason*, and in adhering to *God*. Balance Reasons with Reasons, Evidences with Evidences, Facts with Facts, and thereupon judge where Truth and Credibility, where Error and Bigotry lie. 'Tis easy to raise *Objections* to any thing; as it is easy to be ignorant, or unattentive, or humourfom, or perverse: But the great Point is, whether those

^e Et quid est quod in hac parte, aut vos plurimum habeatis, aut nos minus? Vos *Platoni*, vos *Cronio*, vos *Numenio*, vel cui libuerit creditis: nos credimus & acquiescimus *Christo*. Iniquitas hæc quanta est, ut cum utrique Auctoribus stemus, sitque nobis & vobis unum & focium *credere*, vobis velitis dari, quod ita ab illis dicatur accipere, vos ea quæ proferuntur a *Christo*, audire & spectare nolitis. Atqui si causas causas, partes partibus voluerimus æquare, magis nos valemus ostendere quid in *Christo* fuerimus secuti, quàm in *Philosophis* quid vos. Ac nos quidem in illo secuti hæc sumus: Opera illa magnifica, &c. *Aruob. adv. Gent. l. ii. p. 49.*

Objections, Surmises, or Suspicions, *comparatively*, have any Weight, or how much, when put into the Scale against solid Arguments. There then rests the whole Thing : Let our Accusers shew that the *Reasons* are all on their Side, and then we shall readily admit, that all the *Bigotry* is on ours : But till this be done, (and it is impossible it ever should) the Charge which they bring against us, is as easily retorted as made, and with much more Truth and Justice; which will always be the Case, as often as Christianity is impeached upon this Article.

3. Another famous Term of Reproach, which *Unbelievers* asperse us with, is *Superstition*; a Name which often stands for *Christianity*, or for all *revealed* Religion, in their Nomenclature. But the Word properly imports any *religious Excesses*, either as to Matter, Manner, or Degree. There may be a *Superstitious Awe*, when it is wrong placed, or is of a wrong kind, or exceeds in measure: and whenever we speak of a superstitious *Belief*, or *Worship*, or *Practice*, we always intend some kind of religious *Excess*.

§ See Vossii Etymologicum, in *Superstitio*.

Any *false* Religion, or false part of a true one, is a Species of *Superstition*, because it is *more* than should be, and betokens *Excess*. Hence it has been usual for Persons of some Religion, to style all but their own, *Superstition*, as being *false* in their Account : And they that admit no Religion as true, make *Superstition* the common Name for all. The contrary Extreme to *Excess*, is *Defect*, or want of Religion, and is called *Irreligion*, *Profaneness*, *Impiety*, *Apostasy*, *Atheism*, according to its respective Circumstances and Degrees. The due Mean between the two Extremes, is true and sound Religion. Now, since the Christian Religion is most evidently *true* (if any antient Facts whatever can be proved to be true) we do insist upon it, that it is properly *Religion*, and not *Superstition* : And that a Disbelief of it, where it is sufficiently promulgated, is *Irreligion*, *Profaneness*, *Madness*. This then is a short and a clear Answer to our Adversaries upon the present Head ; that they can never maintain the Charge of *Superstition* against Christian Believers, as such ; but we can easily make good the Charge of *Profaneness*, or *Irreligion* against Them. But be-

F sides

sides that, I may venture perhaps to add, that they are not so clear even of *Superstition* it self, as is commonly imagined : For, *Infidelity* and *Superstition* are, for the most part, near allied, as proceeding from the same Weakness of Judgment, or same Corruption of Heart. Those guilty Fears and Apprehensions of an avenging Deity, which drive some Persons into *Superstition*, do as naturally drive others of a more hard and stubborn Temper into *Infidelity*, or *Atheism* ^h. The same Causes working differently in different Persons, or in the same Persons at different times, produce Both ⁱ : And it has been a common Observation, justifiable by some noted Instances, that no Men whatever have been more apt to exceed

^h See *Smith's* select Discourses, p. 25. & p. 41. &c.

ⁱ A late ingenious Author has well express'd and illustrated the Observation, as follows :

“ *Atheism* and *Superstition* are of the same Origin : they
 “ both have their rise from the same Cause, the same Defect
 “ in the Mind of Man, our Want of Capacity in discerning
 “ Truth, and natural Ignorance of the Divine Essence. Men
 “ that from their most early Youth have not been imbued
 “ with the Principles of the true Religion, or have not afterwards continued to be strictly educated in the same, are all
 “ in great danger of falling either into the *one* or the *other*, according

ceed in *Superstition*, at the sight of Danger, than those who at other times have been most highly *Profane*.

But I may farther observe, that *Superstition* (*practical* *Superstition* at least) may be more directly charged upon *many*, or *most* of our Accusers, as it is their avowed Principle to comply *outwardly* with any publick and authorized *Superstitions* whatever. *Epicurus* and his Followers conformed readily to the popular *Superstitions* ^k, being willing enough to compound at that rate, to save themselves harmless. I have before observed of the Leaders of the modern *Deists* abroad, that they accommodated themselves to the prevailing Religions wheresoever they lived. *Hobbs* and *Spinoza* are known to have advised and inculcated the same Doctrine, making the *Magistrate's* Religion the sovereign Rule for outward Practice^l. Mr. *Toland* observes of

" cording to the *difference* there is in the *Temperament* and
 " *Complexion* they are of, the *Circumstances* they are in, and
 " the *Company* they converse with. *Second Part of the Fable of the Bees*, p. 374.

^k *Vid.* Plutarch: contr. Epicur. opp. Tom. ii. p. 1102.

Origen. contr. Cels. l. vii. p. 375.

^l *Vid.* Kortholtus de tribus Impostoribus, p. 208, &c.

Atheists (and he knew them well) that their Principle is, to stand up for all *established* Religions, by all means, right or wrong^m. The Author of the *Oracles of Reason* and his Friends profess the same Principle of Conformity to the Religion of one's Country, whatever it beⁿ. Some have openly, and with great Immodesty, even boasted of it^o; interpreting it to such a monstrous Latitude, that the same Person might indifferently go to a *Popish* Chappel, or a *Turkish* Mosque, or to an *Indian* Pagod. Among the noted *Characteristicks* of *Atheistical* Men, this commonly makes one, that they follow the

^m *Atheus, commodò suo intentus, nunquam a Stabilita Religione dissentiet ; cui omnes alios, ne suspectus evadat, per fas & nefas velit conformes. Toland. Adeisidæmon, p. 78.*

ⁿ See Blount's *Miscellanies*, p. 202. 203.

Compare Nicholls's *Conference*, Part ii. p. 193.

^o *Colo Deum talem qualem Princeps vel Respublica me jubet. Si Turca, Alcoranum ; Si Judæus, vetus Testamentum ; Si Christianus, novum Testamentum veneror pro Lege & Religionis meæ norma. Papa si imperans, Deum credo Transubstantiatum ; Si Lutherus, Deus mihi particulis in, cum, & sub circumvallatur ; Si Calvinus, Signum pro Deo sumo. Sicque cujus Regio, in qua vivo, ejus me regit opinio, &c. Autor Meditation. Philosoph. &c. apud Budd. Isagog. p. 1390.*

Reli-

Religion of the *Magistrate*, value it not as *true*, but as *established*, and regard it only as an Instrument of *State-Policy* ^P.

Now, one might have expected of those gallant Gentlemen, who had undertaken to assert the Dignity of human Nature, and to

^P Those *Characteristicks* are numbered up in 12 Articles, by a learned Foreigner.

1. Omni occasione data, negare aut in dubium vocare *Supernaturalia* ; Miracula, &c.

2. Sacræ Scripturæ Autoritatem imminuere, aliisque suspectam & contemptam reddere ; Scripturam cum Scriptura & cum ratione committere, & inde elicere contradictiones.

3. Metum omnem & justam sollicitudinem omnibus excutere, nil nisi hilaritatem & securitatem commendare.

4. Immortalitatem Animæ rationalis negare. *

5. Providentiam Dei accusare, vel vocare in dubium.

6. Mysteria Religionis Christianæ exagitare, & scurriliter traducere.

7. Ab Ecclesiæ Ministris abhorreere, & eorum colloquia declinare.

8. Atheismos aliorum cupide enarrare, & Argumenta pro Atheismo tanquam indissolubiles subtilitates admirari.

9. Religionem aliquam strenuè simulare, & gravissimè contra eos qui Atheismi ipsos insimulant, contestari.

10. Religionem non alio nomine urgere, quàm quatenus ad rationem Status facit.

11. Atheismi Impugnationes & Increpationes ægre ferre.

12. Libros Gentilium libentius quàm Christianorum legere, & Sacræ Scripturæ Lectionem averfari.

Adjiciunt plerique, non seorsim esse spectanda hæc criteria, sed conjunctim, si velimus sincerum ex iis ferre judicium. Reiman. Histor. Atheismi, p. 17, 18.

rescue

rescue Mankind from the Slavery of *Superstition*, that They more especially should have abhorred the Practice, or even the Appearance of it. For, what is the Use of their superior Wisdom, and their Elevation of Thought above the *Vulgar*, if it be not to inform Practice, and conduct Life? The strongest Objection against *Superstition*, and the worst Circumstance of it, is, that it leads Men to ridiculous and absurd *Practices*, such as dishonour God, and debase the Dignity of Man, and do Mischief to the World. *Speculative* Superstition is an innocent harmless thing, in comparison of *Practical*: And therefore what Glory is there in discarding the former only? They that reject Superstition in *Theory*, and yet retain it in *Life*, and that upon *Principle* too, do but expose their own *Folly* and *Falseness* both in one. There can scarce be conceived a more contemptible Figure in Nature, than a Man railing at all *Superstitions*, and at the same time practising, and persuading others to practise, all that come. Might he not much more decently forbear censuring the publick *Religions*, or *Superstitions*, than thus fall to *censuring*, first, and then to *practising* what he condemns, and last of all

all, to instructing *others* to do the same thing; Such Persons have no Reason to value themselves upon any supposed Superiority in *Notion* or *Sentiment*, because there cannot be a more abject or pusillanimous *Principle*, than what They espouse: And why should they condemn others for being *Superstitious*, and that but in *part*, while their own Practice is *totally* such? I do not charge all the *Deists* with such Practices or Principles; I know, they are divided upon that Article: But so many at least as do espouse them, may prudently be silent on this head. Such unsincere, and inconsistent Conduct cannot be the Conduct of good *moral* Men, or Men of *Probity*†. But I pass on.

4. Next to the Charge of *Superstition*, follows *Enthusiasm*, another Term of Reproach,

† An odd sort of Apology the *Pantheisticon* makes for such kind of Dissimulation. The Sum of it is, that Religious Men are *Mad*, or *Fools*, and therefore Infidels may humour them, and comply with them *outwardly*, as Nurses do with froward *Children*. Pantheistæ, quæ eorum est moderatio, non aliter cum hominibus *deliris* & *pertinacibus* agunt, ac *Nutricula* cum balbutientibus suis alumnis.—Qui *infantulis*, in hisce nugis non *adblandiuntur*, iis injucundi sunt & exosivi.—Hinc necessario evenit, ut *aliud sit in pectore* & privato Confessu, *aliud in Foro* & publica Concione. *Pantheisticon*, p. 79, 80. How decently may such Persons exclaim against *pious Frauds*, or *religious Cheats*!

and often made a Name for the *true Religion* of *Christ*, by Men disposed to defame and to destroy it. There have been unhappy Persons, whose Heads have been disturbed with religious *Melancholy*, or devout *Frenzies*; the Flights and Sallies of an overheated imagination, and a distempered Mind. From hence weak or wicked Men have taken the handle to ascribe all Religion to *Enthusiasm*, or *Fanaticism*; that is, to a kind of Frenzy, or Dotage. But to such a Suggestion, so far as concerns *Moses* and the *Prophets*, *Christ* and his *Apostles*, we answer, that those excellent Personages, by their whole *Conduct*, gave sufficient Proofs that they were no *Enthusiasts*, never disordered in Mind. Besides, we insist upon it, that Sallies of Imagination never did, never could produce any such sound and consistent Doctrines as they taught, never wrought such *Miracles*, never uttered such *Prophecies*: Neither can the *Facts* which we appeal to, be contested, without shaking the Faith of all History, and retiring to universal *Scepticism*, which would be Madness indeed. There cannot be a wilder Thought than for a Man to imagine that the World was converted by Lunatics and Madmen;

“ that

“ that Men hurried by the Impetus of a wild
 “ extravagant Fancy, were Masters of all that
 “ *Conduct* and *Management*, that *Argument*
 “ and *Address*, which was requisite to bring
 “ those astonishing Effects about. Or if he
 “ finds it too hard to suppose that a Compa-
 “ ny of distracted Men should ever be able to
 “ argue with so much Art and Force, as to
 “ overpower all the Wisdom and Learning of
 “ the World; then he must think the rest of
 “ Mankind, who believed them, to be *mad*,
 “ as well as they; that they were convinced
 “ and persuaded by mere *Enthusiasm*, that
 “ they mistook downright Raving for the
 “ strongest Reason, and a Chain of absurd in-
 “ coherent Falsities, for bright and evident
 “ Demonstrations of Truth; that all the
 “ Sages, Statesmen, and Philosophers, who
 “ embraced Christianity in great Numbers,
 “ as well as the Poor and Illiterate, be-
 “ lieved they had Proofs which they had
 “ not; thought things were plain and clear
 “ to them which were not; fancied irresisti-
 “ ble Strength, Majesty, and Eloquence, in
 “ an empty Noise and Sound of Words,
 “ made by a Company of poor distemper’d
 G “ Men

“ Men, who neither knew nor cared what
 “ they said ”.

But if any Persons notwithstanding can have Confidence enough to charge the Founder of our Religion, or the Sacred Writers with *Enthusiasm*, that is, with *Madness*, may it not be proper to ask, what kind of Complexion the Men are of, who make such a groundless Charge; and whether They are not the *Visionaries*, rather than the other. There may be an *irreligious* Frenzy, as well as a *religious* one; and the Imagination may be as soon heated with a Spirit of *Profaneness*, as with the Fervours of *Piety*. A very learned and judicious Writer has said, that there are Enthusiastical, or Fanatical *Atheists*, and that “ all manner of Atheists whatsoever, and
 “ those of them who most pretend to Reason
 “ and Philosophy, may in some Sense, be
 “ justly styled both *Enthusiasts* and *Fanatics*:
 “ Forasmuch as they are not led or carried on
 “ into this way of Atheizing, by any clear

* *Ditton* on the Resurrection of Christ, p. 364. compare p. 310, &c.

See also *Nicholls's* Conference, Part II. p. 230, &c.

Fay's Defens. Relig. cont. *Toland*, c. xiii. p. 71.

Campbell's Discourse proving that the Apostles were no Enthusiasts.

“ Dictates

“ Dictates of their Reason or Understanding ;
 “ but only by an ἑρμὴ ἀλογος, a certain *blind*
 “ and irrational Impetus, they being as it
 “ were inspired to it by that lower earthly
 “ Life and Nature, or the Spirit of the World,
 “ or Mundane Spirit.—The Mundane
 “ Spirit, or earthy Life, is irrational Sottish-
 “ ness ; and they who are Atheistically inspi-
 “ red by it (how abhorrent soever they may
 “ otherwise seem to be from *Enthusiasm*, and
 “ Revelations) are notwithstanding really no
 “ better than a kind of bewitched *Enthusiasts*,
 “ and blind *Spiritati*, that are wholly ridden
 “ and acted by a dark, narrow and captivated
 “ Principle of Life.—Nay, they are *Fanaticks*
 “ too, however that Word seem to have a
 “ more peculiar Respect to something of a
 “ Deity; all Atheists being that blind Goddess
 “ Nature’s Fanaticks †.”

The Observation is cited and approved by
 a noble Writer, who has been thought not
 partial on the side of Religion. He says, that
Atheism it self is not exempt from *Enthusiasm*,
 but there have been *Enthusiastical* Atheists †.
 He repeats it elsewhere *, and confirms it

† Cudworth. Intellect. Syst. p. 134.

‡ Characteristicks, Vol. I. p. 52.

‡ Characteristicks, Vol. III. p. 63, 64.

more at large. The same noble Author scruples not to say, that “ to deny the Magistrate “ a *Worship*, or take away a *national Church*, “ is as mere *Enthusiasm* as the Notion which “ sets up *Persecution* ^y.

To confirm what has been hinted of the *Enthusiasm* of these Men, who charge us with it, let but any one seriously consider the *Pantheistick* System (which is reported, by those that should know, to be a favourite System amongst them, and as fashionable as any ^z) whether it be not as wild *Euthusiasm*, as ever was invented and published to the World. It supposes God and Nature, or God and the whole Universe, to be one and the same Substance, one *Universal Being*; insomuch that Mens Souls are only *Modifications* of the divine Substance : from whence it follows, that what Men will, God wills also; and what they say, God says; and what they do, God does ^a. Was there ever any raving Enthusiast

^y Characteristicks, Vol. I. p. 17.

^z *Parisiis* plurimum versantur [*Pantheistæ*] itidem *Venetiis*; in omnibus *Hollandiæ* Urbibus, maxime certe *Amstelodami*; & nonnulli, quod mireris, in ipsa curia *Romana*: Sed præcipue, & præ aliis locis omnibus, *Londini* abundant, ibique sedem, & quasi arcem suæ sectæ collocant. *Pantheisticon*, p. 42.

^a See the *Pantheistick* Principles drawn out more at large

thusiast that discovered greater Extravagance: This Doctrine first owed its Birth to *Pagan* Darkneſs ^b, and revived afterwards among the *Jewiſh* Cabbaliſts ^c: From thence it was handed down to *Spinoſa*, who was originally a *Jew*, and from him it deſcended to the Author or Authors of the *Pantheiſticon*; who while they are themſelves the greateſt *Viſionaries* in Nature, yet ſcruple not to charge the Chriſtian World with *Enthuſiaſm*.

There is another, tho' a more pardonable Inſtance of *Fanaticiſm*, or *Enthuſiaſm*, among ſome modern *Deiſts*, relating to *Virtue*, conſidered as ſubſiſting, and in an eminent degree too, independent on Hopes and Fears, or on future Rewards and Penalties ^d: A chimerical Notion, and betraying the greateſt Ignorance both of Men and Things. What but ſome egregious Warmth of Imagination, by Mr. Bayle in the Article *Spinoza*, and well confuted, p. 2792.

^b See *Buddeus's* *Analecſta Hiſtor. Philoſoph. in exercitat. de Spinoziſmo ante Spinozam*, p. 317, &c.

Cudworth's *Intellect. Syſt.* p. 306, 344.

Bayle's *Dictionary*, in *Spinoza*, p. 2782.

^c See *Buddeus*, *ibid.* p. 346, &c.

Reimman. Hiſt. Atheiſmi, p. 45, 46, 47.

^d Ad beate vivendum ſola ſufficit Virtus; ſuaque ſibi eſt fatis ampla merces. *Pantheiſticon.* p. 57. *comp.* Chriſtianity as old as the Creation, p. 25. 367.

could

could ever induce any Man to conceive, that he might be capable of practising a nobler kind of Virtue than *Abel*, or *Enoch*, or *Noah*, or *Abraham*, or even *Christ* himself, considered in his human Nature? All these owed their brightest Instances of Virtue to *Faith*^e, to the respect they had to the *Recompence of Reward*^f, to the *Joy that was set before* them^g; which is a *just and rational* Principle, suited most certainly to the Circumstances of this Life. Possibly in a Life to come, Virtue and Pleasure may constantly coincide, where we suppose all to be uniformly virtuous, and where there will be no Clashing, no Interfering, no Trials, no Conflicts: But in this Life, undoubtedly, Virtue, in any high degree of Perfection, is present *Self-denial*, and cannot be made *rational*, that is cannot be *Virtue* (for *Virtue* and *Folly* are not the same thing) without taking into Consideration *future Prospects*^h. It is romantick to talk of a new
kind

^e See Hebr. xi. 4, &c.

^f Hebr. xi. 26.

^g Hebr. xii. 2.

^h Hæc causa est, cur præceptis eorum nullus obtemperet; quoniam aut ad vitia erudiunt si voluptatem defendunt; aut si Virtutem asserunt, neque Pœnam minantur nisi solius Turpitudinis.

kind of Virtue never yet practis'd, nor practicable: or if it were, *Caprice*, or *Convenience*, or *Vain-glory*, not *Virtue*, is the Name for it. For if it be founded on *worldly* Considerations, it is *Convenience* only, or *Vain-glory*; and if it be founded on no Considerations, it is *Caprice*: and between these two, there is no medium, in this Case, but *Faith* in a World to come. The ancient *Stoicks*, having but dark and fluctuating views of another Life, were, in a manner, driven in to that dry Doctrine, of *Virtue being constantly its own Reward*, in order to solve the Difficulties concerning *Providence*. The *Epicureans*, absolutely re-

tudinis, neque virtuti ullum præmium pollicentur, nisi solius Honestatis & Laudis, cum dicant, non propter aliud, sed propter seipsam expetendam esse virtutem.——Non enim tantum *Religionem* asserere noluerunt, verum etiam sustulerunt, dum specie *virtutis falsæ* inducti, conantur animos omni metu liberare. *Lactant.* l. iii. c. 26. p. 165, 166.

“ Altho’ it be true, that as Things now stand, and as the
 “ Nature of Men is framed, good Men do find a strange kind
 “ of inward Pleasure and secret Satisfaction of Mind in the
 “ Discharge of their Duty, and in doing what is virtuous;
 “ yet every Man that looks into himself, and consults his own
 “ Breast, will find, that this Delight and Contentment springs
 “ chiefly from the Hopes which good Men conceive that an
 “ holy and virtuous Life will not be unrewarded; and without
 “ these Hopes, *Virtue* is but a *dead and empty* Name. *Tillot-*
son Serm. cxxi. p. 121.

jecting

jecting both divine *Providence*, and a *future State*, made *Pleasure*, worldly *Pleasure*, the Reward of Virtue, that they might not seem altogether to desert the Cause ; and their Virtue proved accordingly. The *Saducees*, among the *Jews*, came nearer to the *Stoical* Principles, having fallen into them, as it seems, unawares, thro' a kind of *Enthusiastick* Affectation of soaring above common Sense. The *Mysticks* followed, and deviated in like manner with the former, by over-refining and subtilizing plain Things. After Them, came a Set of *Enthusiasts* amongst us, in the ill times, who revived the same Principles, and were solidly confuted by several of our able and learned Divinesⁱ. The *Deists*

ⁱ Bp. *Bull's* Posth. Sermons, Vol. II. p. 593.

Wilkins's Sermon on Heb. xi. 26.

Sharrock de Fin. &c. p. 70. &c.

Boyle's Seraph. Love, p. 118.

South's Sermon. Vol. IV. p. 178.

Tillotson's Post. Sermon. cxxi. p. 121.

“ Tho' a Man were never so much in love with Virtue, for
 “ the Native *Beauty* and *Comeliness* of it ; yet it would strange-
 “ ly cool his Affection to it, to consider, that he should be *un-*
 “ done by the Match ; that when he had it, he must go a
 “ begging with it, and be in danger of *Death* for the sake of
 “ that which he had chosen for the Felicity of his Life. *Til-*
lotson, *ibid.*

seem to fall in sometimes with the *Stoicks*, and sometimes with the *Epicureans*, following Virtue (as they say) either for its *Beauty*, or for the *present Pleasure* attending it, abstracted from the Consideration of *future Rewards*; that so they may carry on a *Show* of supporting Morality, while they are paring away the Ground upon which it stands. If they are sincere and honest in their Doctrine, it is a Spice of *Enthusiasm*; and if they are not, it is worse.

I may farther observe, that there appears besides, in the present Advocates for *Deism*, a very particular turn of Mind, such as seems not to differ, in any thing material, from a Spirit of *Enthusiasm*; if it is not grave Banter, or solemn Grimace. Their way is, to sanctify their Flights of Fancy, their own roving Inventions, under the sacred Name of *Reason*, which they style also, in part, *Divine Inspiration*^k, and in the whole, *Internal Revelation*^l. Hereupon they presume to talk as familiarly of God's Mind and Laws, and with as warm an Assurance, as if

^k Christianity as old, &c. p. 182, 194, 330.

^l Christianity as old, &c. p. 3, 8, 67, 70, 369.

they had been wrapp'd up into the third Heaven, or had sate in Counsel with the Almighty. They prescribe, according as their Fancies dictate, where they know nothing, what Services God ought to expect ^m, what Indulgences he should make to *warm Desires* ⁿ, what *Penalties* he may appoint here or hereafter ^o. They enter Caveats against his being *arbitrary* ^p, so as to enact any thing which they see not the *Reason* for; and against his playing the *Tyrant* ^q, either by imposing *positive* Laws without their *Consent* ^r, or by abridging them of their *natural* Right ^s (that is, of what they might otherwise enjoy upon the *permissive* Law of Nature) or by interposing in Matters *indifferent* ^t (which every petty Prince, or State may do) or by *punishing* the Incurable for Sins *past* ^u. This is taking great Lengths of Freedom with the high and tremendous

^m Christianity as old, &c. p. 3. 105, 115, 116, 124, 125.

ⁿ Ibid. p. 345.

^o Ibid. p. 38, &c.

^p Ibid. p. 30, 35, 61, 65, 114, 116, 125, 130, 370.

^q Ibid. p. 29, 30, 32, 38, 70, 122, 176, 188.

^r Ibid. p. 113. compare Script. Vindicat. Part II. p. 89. and Pufendorf, Book iii. c. 4. s. 4. p. 254.

^s Ibid. p. 113, 134.

^t Ibid. p. 132, 135, 171, 370.

^u See *Second Address*, p. 7.

Deity, such as one would not expect from any but the wildest *Enthusiasts*. Indeed, all Claims to any *internal* Notices exclusive of God's *written* Word, whether they be intituled *Inspiration*, or *internal Revelation*, or *inward Light*, or *Reason*, or *Infallibility*, or what else soever ; I say, all such Claims brought to exclude Scripture, are *Enthusiastick* and *Fanatical*, false and vain.

But some perhaps may ask, can those then be *Enthusiasts*, who profess to follow *Reason*? Yes, undoubtedly, if by *Reason* they mean only *Conceits*. Therefore such Persons are now commonly called *Reasonists*, and *Rationalists*, to distinguish them from true *Reasoners*, or *rational Enquirers*. For their great Fault is, that they will not suffer *Reason* to have its *free* Course, or *full* Exercise, nor allow it sufficient *Light*. *Reason* desires and requires all useful *Notices*, and all the friendly *Intimations* that can be procured : But these her most insidious Adversaries, under a false Plea of *Sufficiency*°, confine her to short Measures, and shut

° The common Pretences about the *Sufficiency* of Reason, for furnishing out a compleat System of *Religion* and *Morality*, seem to have just as much Sense in them, as if a Man should pretend to draw out a compleat System of *Opticks*,

Shut up the Avenues of Improvement : By which it plainly appears, that they are just such Friends to *Reason*, as they are to *Morality*; Friends to the *Name*, and that is all. They follow *Reason*, as they profess : But we maintain, that *Reason* it self directs us to take in *Scripture*, when we have it before us, for our *Light*, and our *Guide*. Who then is the Friend to *Reason* ? he that flatters her with empty *Compliments*, or he that follows her *Rules* ?

5. From the Article of *Enthusiasm*, I proceed next to two other Terms of Reproach, namely *State-craft* and *Priest-craft*, nearly allied to each other (for which reason I mention them together) and frequently made use of by Unbelievers, in order to render true Religion odious, or suspected. It has often

setting aside all the Instructions brought in by Facts, and Observations; or a compleat System of *Philosophy*, or *Medicine*, throwing out the Informations of *History*, and *Experiments*. The Scripture Accounts are as necessary to be super-added to *abstract Reason*, in order to form a compleat System of *Religion* and *Morality*, as those other Accounts are to compleat the respective *Arts* and *Sciences* : And if *Reason* requires that these should be taken in, it is running counter to *Reason*, and destroying the *Use* of it, to leave them out. Therefore the Pretences of these Gentlemen to *Reason*, are mere Fallacies and Impositions upon their Readers.

been

been suggested, that Religion owed its Birth and Progress to the subtle Contrivances of *Politicians*, and *Priests*. Indeed *Priests* seem to have come in the later, to bear their share in the Scandal. Formerly, *Princes* only, or *Lawgivers*, were marked out as the most likely Persons to have wrought those marvellous Effects upon Mankind. In the very nature of the Thing, *Religion* should be conceived prior to *Priesthood* appointed to serve in it: unless we were to suppose some previous and special Designation of the Persons by Almighty God. In the natural course of Things, if Religion was all of human Invention, it must have been invented before *Priests* were appointed or made. For example: *Evander*, suppose, and *Numa*, invented and formed several Religions, or Superstitions, and then appointed the *Luperci*, *Potitii*, *Pinnarii*, *Salii*, &c. to administer. I say then, that Religion, in such a Case, must naturally go before Priesthood: which is true, tho' the *Inventor* should *appoint* himself. And therefore *Critias* was so far in the right, when he thought of fathering Religion upon human Policy, to ascribe the Invention of it to *Lawgivers*,

givers ^p, or *Politicians*, not to Priests. *Critias* was one of the thirty Tyrants of *Athens*, (in the Days of *Socrates*, whose most unworthy Pupil he had once been) a wicked and profligate Man, by all accounts ^q, a perfect *Atheist* ^r. There could not be a fitter Person to set on Foot the Conceit, that all Religion was a Trick of State. *Euripides* in one of his Plays, introduces *Sisyphus*, an ungodly Wretch, as saying the same Thing ^s, agreeably to his Character: For there is no Reason to suspect with *Plutarch* ^t, (or whoever is the Author) that *Euripides* there express'd his own Sentiments under Disguise ^u. I shall not here waste your time in confuting that chimerical Notion of *Critias*, and his Atheistical Companions. It was exploded by all

^p Sextus Empiricus, Adv. Physic. l. ix. p. 562. Edit. Fabric.

^q See Bayle's Dictionary, in *Critias*.

^r *Plutarch*. de Superstitione, opp. Tom. 2. p. 171.

Sext. Empiric. p. 182, 562.

Theoph. Antioch. l. iii. p. 292. Edit. Hamb.

^s Euripides in *Sisyphus*, p. 492. Edit. Barnes.

^t *Plutarch*. de placit. Philosoph. Tom. ii. p. 880.

^u *Euripides* has been well defended by

Barnes, in *Notis*, ad Euripid. p. 492, 493.

Fabricius, in *Not.* ad Sext. Empiric. p. 562.

Bayle, in *Euripides*, and *Critias*.

Stillingfleet. Origin. Sacr. Part ii. p. 49.

Reimarus. Hist. Atheism, p. 123.

sober Men as soon as started : It is sufficiently answered, even by *Sextus Empiricus*^x, a *Pagan* Sceptick ; but has been since more abundantly confuted and exposed by several learned Moderns ^y. The Academick, in *Cicero*, occasionally makes mention of it, as an impious Suggestion, contrived to overturn all Religion ^z. Now, [as to our particular Case, there needs no further Answer more than to observe, that it would be infinitely absurd to resolve *Christianity* into *State-craft*, when it is certain and unquestionable Fact, that Christianity subsisted for 300 Years together, independent of the secular Powers, and in defiance to the united *State-craft* of all the World. I shall just take notice, that those *Atheistical* Objectors, in their blind Zeal against Religion, happened to lay their In-

^x Sext. Empiric. p. 556.

^y *Stillingfleet* Origin. Sacr. Part ii. c. 1.

Cudworth Intellect. Syst. p. 691, &c.

Tillotson Serm. I. p. 16. Fol. Edit.

Fabricius de Veritat. Relig. Christianæ. c. ix. p. 317.

Fay Defens. Relig. contr. Toland, p. 51, 52.

^z Quid ? ii qui dixerunt totam de diis immortalibus opinionem fictam esse ab Hominibus sapientibus Reipublicæ causa, ut quos *Ratio* non posset, eos ad officium *Religio* duceret ; nonne omnem Religionem funditus sustulerunt ? *Cicer. de Natura Deor.* c. 42. p. 102. Ed. Davis.

dictment wrong. It is true, that many Tricks have been plaid with Religion, by Princes, States, and People ; and many Superstitions, False-worships, and Impostures have owed their Birth to those Causes : So it was not *Religion*, but the *Corruptions* of Religion, which came in by *State-craft*. *Jeroboam*, for Instance, among the *Jews*, and *Numa* among the *Romans*, served up some *Impostures* of their own, superadding them to the old Foundation, grafting their own Superstitions upon the ancient Religion. For the Fault has been (and it resolves into the *Depravity* of human Nature) that Men generally have not been content with Religion, as it came at first *pure* out of the Hands of God, but they would have the correcting and refining of it (as they fancied) to themselves; either to accommodate it to their own particular Taste, or to serve some other sinister and secular Ends. It is the same thing, in the main, with what *Infidels* are now doing, and have been doing all along; only with this Difference, that *Politicians* carried the Humour not quite so far : For they were content with *corrupting* Religion, while nothing will serve these other Gentlemen, but
discarding

discarding it, all but the *Name*, under pretence still of improving, and refining it. There is the same *Secular Craft* in both Cases, only exerting it self in a different way: For Both agree in the main leading Principle; which is, to take Religion into their *own* Hands, and to deal with it as they please, abandoning the Guidance of *God*, to follow their own *Inventions*.

6. But it is time for me now to pass on from *State-craft*, to the other more famous Article of the two, intitl'd *Priest-craft*. It is a favourite Word amongst our modern *Unbelievers*, and has been thought to make no small Figure in their Writings. The *Ends* proposed by haranguing upon this abusive Topick, seem to be, first, to wound *Religion* through the Sides of its Ministers; next, to give vent to some uneasy *Passions*; and lastly, if possible, to draw in the unsuspecting, unguarded *Laiety* as Parties to the Quarrel against their *Guides*. Now as to this compound Word *Priest-craft* (since there is a Necessity of condescending to these minutenesses) I take it to mean some *Fraud* of Priests, in imposing *false Facts*, or *false Doctrines*, or *false Claims* upon the World, under the Name of
I Religion,

Religion, for their own Humour, Ambition, or Advantage. The Charge of such *Sacerdotal* Craft, hath often been unjustly laid by *Anti-sacerdotal* Pride or Resentment: Thus *Korah* and his Company charged *Aaron*, God's High-Priest, very injuriously, with *taking too much upon him*^a; that is to say, with *Ambition*, or *Priestcraft*. Nevertheless, there are Instances of Priestcraft *justly* charged, and in the same Scriptures: There were many *false* Priests, such as the Priests of *Baal*, and such as *Jeroboam* by his wicked Policy set up; in Both which there was undoubtedly Guile and Priest-craft. There were also *true* Priests, but very ill Men, who misbehaved in their Office, and made an infamous Merchandise of their Holy Function: Such were *Hophni* and *Phinehas*, the two Sons of *Eli*; who are therefore justly chargeable with *Priestcraft*, and are perhaps the first Examples of it on Record. But as the Charge is of a very high and heinous Nature, it ought never to be made upon mere Surmises or Suspicions, nor without plain and full Proof. It cannot, I presume, be proved, that either *Christ* or his *Apostles* craftily imposed any *false Facts*, or *false*

^a Numb. xvi. 3.

Doctrines, or *false Claims* upon the World. They were Persons, as far removed as possible from *Craft* and *Guile*, in their whole Conduct and Character: Neither could any human Device, or Subtlety, without direct Assistance from above, have ever converted the World as they did. *Christianity* therefore in it self, is certainly no *Priest-craft*; and this is sufficient for us to insist upon, in opposition to *Deists*. For could they prove ever so much *Priest-craft* upon the Christian Clergy, it is all foreign and impertinent to their Cause, while *Christianity* it self stands clear of the Imputation. A dissenting *Christian*, who should desire a farther Reformation, might *pertinently* exclaim against the *Priest-craft* of the Christian Clergy, if there were occasion for it: But in a *Deist* the Complaint is beside the purpose; because his Quarrel, primarily and properly, is not with the *modern Clergy*, but with *Christ* and his *Apostles*, and with *Christianity* it self. As soon as ever a Man discovers himself to be an *Infidel*, his Complaints against the modern Clergy become *bruta fulmina*, frivolous Remonstrances, such as answer themselves. For when it is observed, that those who complain so tragically of the *Tyranny* of

the Christian and Protestant Clergy, complain also as heavily of the *Tyranny* of all *positive* Institutions, and of all *revealed* Religion, and deal as rudely, almost, with the *sacred* Writers themselves, and even with *God* most high, as they had before done with Christian *Priests*; this is clearing up the whole Affair to the meanest Capacity, and is a more sensible Argument in favour of the Clergy, abused with so much better Company, than any other Apology whatsoever: Because now it appears that the principal Ground of the Displeasure against them, is, that they are *Christians*.

We deny not however, that *Priests* may be corrupt, as well as *Laicks*, for Both are *Men*. What Profession is there which may not, or has not, or will not frequently be abused? *Kings* have often debased the Throne of Majesty; *Senators* have betrayed their most weighty Trusts; *Judges* have defiled the Bench of Justice: Even *Prophets* have misused their prophetick Dignity; and One *Apostle*, of Twelve, disgraced the Apostolate it self. How then can it be expected, that *Priests* should never shame their Order; unless they could plead Exemption from human

man Infirmities, or had the Privilege to be Impeccable ? But supposing them ever so corrupt, what Argument does it carry with it for the purposes of *Deism* ? What if Lawyers should be found to pervert both Law and Justice ? does it follow that our Legal Privileges are all so many *Nullities*, that *Magna Charta* is a *Fiction*, and the Statute-book an *Imposture* ? I presume, such Logick is too light to bear in that Case: And I see no reason why it should be of more Force in the other. The Faults of Christian *Priests*, or of *Christians*, are no Argument against the *Profession*, but against the *Professors* only, as every one knows, and as has been said a thousand times over : And therefore complaints on that head are foreign and impertinent (were they otherwise ever so just) in the Mouths of *Deists* ; tho' few besides themselves are observed to exaggerate as They do.

There are indeed those who would persuade us, that there is scarce such a thing as a *Deist* in the Kingdom, but that they who are suspected to impugn Christianity, *only write against Priest-craft* ^b. It seems, they

^b Examination of the Facts, &c. in the Bishop of *Chichester's* Sermon, p. 58.

are at length sensible, how incompetent the Plea is, and how foreign to the Cause of Infidelity.

We might be heartily glad, my Reverend Brethren, to find the Report true: For then how amicably might we unite together, our Accusers and we, in condemning and exploding that odious Thing, *Priestcraft*, to end all Disputes. I have no Inclination to magnify the Number of *Deists*: I am willing rather to hope, they will appear but as an handful of Men in Comparison. Yet some there certainly are, who write against both *Testaments*, and in such an unfriendly manner, that if they were the most avowed Infidels, they could not do more. These Men we call *Deists*, a Name of their own chusing to avoid a worse. Some would have us add the Epithet of *Christian* to it, and to style them *Christian Deists*^c: A Phrase which it will be hard to make Sense of, as here applied, more than of *Christian Pagans*, *Christian Mahometans*, or *Christian Infidels*. Indeed, the Word *Deist*, or *Theist*, in its original Signification, implies merely the Belief of a *God*, being opposed to *Atheist*: and so there may be *Deists* of va-

^c Christianity as old as the Creation, p. 361, 371.

rious kinds according to the respective Religions which they receive, over and above that prime Article. There may be *Pagan Deists*, and *Jewish Deists*, and *Mahometan Deists*, and *Christian Deists*; meaning such Persons as respectively embrace those several Religions, above the Belief of a God. But Those that reject all Traditional Religions, and yet profess to believe in God, are merely *Deists*, or emphatically such, without any additional Epithet to distinguish them: Or if an Epithet must be added, they should be styled *Epicurean Deists*, or *Infidel Deists*, or something of like kind. To call them *Christian Deists*, is a great Abuse of Language; unless Christians were to be distributed into two sorts, *Christians* and *Non-christians*, or *Christians* and *Anti-christians*.

It is very true, what a late Writer says, that these Gentlemen do *profess to be Christians*^d: And it were strange if they should not in a *Christian Country*, where the very Name is venerable; especially considering that even *Hobbes* and *Spinoza*, and others of like Principles did so before them. They understood the Policy of introducing *new Doctrines* gradually, and imperceptibly, under the Co-

^d Examination of the Bp. of *Chichester's* Sermon, p. 58.

ver of the *old* Names: So they retained the *Terms*, but shifted the *Ideas* as they pleased. They retain'd the *Name*, but labour'd to destroy the *Thing* under affected and foreign Names, viz. *Credulity*, *Superstition*, *Priestcraft*, and the like, as I have been shewing.

As to *Priestcraft*, which we are now upon, if these Gentlemen have any where observed it, they may bear the more patiently with it, because it is much the same Thing with what themselves are deeply engaged in; as They are labouring to impose *false Facts*, *false Doctrines*, and *false Claims* upon the World, under the Name of *Religion*, for their own Humour, Ambition, or Advantage. Neither is it to the purpose to plead, that *no body is paid to maintain Deism*, or that *no Interest attends it*^e; For, be that ever so true or certain, in the Sense intended (which might bear some Dispute) yet if the Maintainers of *Deism* may be supposed to gratify either their *Vices*, or their *Vanity*, or their *Resentments*, they have then an *Interest* to serve in doing it: They are *paid* in such a way as most pleases them; and none can be paid higher. When any Man indulges his predominant Passions to the ut-

^e Examination, &c. p. 6c.

most,

most, be the Instance what it will, he thinks himself well *paid* in doing it. and he is a *gainer* so far, in his own account, because he gains his End^f.

But

^f A fine Writer turns the Argument upon them another way : “ There is something so ridiculous and perverse in this
“ kind of Zealots, that one does not know how to set them
“ out in their proper Colours. They are a sort of *Gamesters*,
“ who are eternally upon the Fret, tho’ they *play for no-*
“ *thing*. They are perpetually teizing their Friends to come
“ over to them, tho’ at the same time they allow that
“ neither of them shall get any thing by the Bargain. In short,
“ the Zeal of *spreading* Atheism is, if possible, more absurd
“ than *Atheism* it self. *Addison’s Evidences*, &c. p. 223.
Another very ingenious Writer hints the same Thing
more briefly thus : “ One would think that Libertines, of
“ all Men, should be unconcern’d in making *Profelytes*; since
“ they expect no *future* Reward for their Labour, and to suc-
“ ceed in it, would be only to spoil their *present* Market.
Enquiry after Wit, p. 90.

The turn of the Thought in Both appears to be very just, as to any real or lasting Interest here, or hereafter : But yet, those Gentlemen have an Interest to serve in what they do, and they know what they *play for*, so long as they run no great Risques in a temporal Account, and are regardless of the future. It is a Pleasure to Some, merely to be *talk’d of*, as Men of uncommon Sentiments. Most have a Fondness for their own Conceptions, tho’ never so much out of the way ; and they expect to be highly *admired* for them : Some affect to *surprize* the publick with *Paradoxes*, and They are sure to gratify some of the looser sort, and to obtain their *Applauses*. Add to this, that it is a *Relief* to many, to fence as much as possible

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against

But perhaps there may be some Reflexion insinuated against the maintainers of *Christianity*, as they are *paid* for doing it. The Fact is true, and it is an honour to them, that they are paid by the *Publick*. It is an Argument that what they teach, is conformable, in the main, to the general Sentiments of the *wisest* and *best* Men amongst us, is the Sense of the *Legislature*, and Voice of the *whole Nation* ; not *private Perswasions* : A Circumstance, as I conceive, very much in their favour, and, other things supposed equal, a Presumption that *Truth* is with Them, rather than the contrary. Besides, such publick Allotments are so many Testimonies given to the Dignity and Usefulness of their Ministry, like as in other useful and honourable Employments, *Civil* and *Military*. And what can

against their inward Fears, Doubts, and Misgivings, by any strained Declamations : And as they are *uneasy* to find that Religion is held in Honour, or Priests in Esteem, they may be inclinable to try, how far it may be practicable to turn the Current of *Publick Repute*, or however to bear up against it, for a Time. These things considered, I do not think it so hard to account for some Mens *Zeal in spreading Atheism or Deism*, as for their being *Atheists*, or *Deists*.

be

be the Reason that *Deism*, which has subsisted now for 2000 Years, or more (reckoning from the Days of *Epicurus*) should never yet meet with any Kingdom or State, among *Pagans*, *Jews*, *Mahometans*, or *Christians*, that should judge it a Thing proper to be supported at the publick Charge, or *worth* the *rewarding*? I forbear to say more. Let those Gentlemen then go and tell it abroad, as much or as often as they please, that the Ministers of Christ are *paid* for defending Christianity, or *hired* to do it (for so they love to express it ^g;) it is all very well, so long as the *Labourers* are *worthy* of their *Hire* ^h. And when those other Gentlemen shall please to produce any thing as useful to Society as *Christianity* is, and as beneficial to Mankind, here and hereafter, then may They also reasonably hope for the like *Honour* of being *paid* by the Publick for it. It is neither mean, nor blame-worthy, in the general, to take Rewards for *good* Services; but it is always a Fault to serve as Volunteers in *bad* ones. Those that defend Christianity, do the thing that is *right* (whatever their Motives be) while

^g Christianity as old as the Creation, p, 165, 233, 234, 305.

^h Luke x. 7.

Those that either corrupt it, mutilate it, or discard it, do *wrong*, which makes a sensible difference. As to *Motives*, here or there, the favourable Presumption will always lie on the side of the *Religious*, that their Motives are not merely *secular*, because they believe in a Judgment to come, which their Accusers despise. Christians *may* act purely upon secular Motives, but Infidels of course *will*: Therefore let them not reproach us on this Head.

I have but one thing farther to add upon the Subject of *Priestcraft*, namely, that after all the Clamours which have been raised about it, in this *Protestant*¹ Kingdom, I cannot

ⁱ The Words of a learned *Protestant* abroad, may here be properly inserted.

An est Religio *Reformata* Politicæ in totum adaptata? An in verbi divini præconum emolumentum concinnata, quorum stipendia plerisque in locis ad æsem usque definita sunt? An est horum Pietas Ars & purus putus Quæstus? An vendunt Sacra? an falsis Miraculis & Fabulis anilibus vulgus imperitum decipiunt, nisi pias conciones de Deo & Christo, de nostri Salvatoris ejusque Apostolorum miraculis, de pœnis & præmiis post mortem, commenta esse velit *Adeisdæmon*, qui, nisi me fallit mens, id non diffitebitur? An Fraudes & mendacia aucupantur ii qui populo nudam veritatem ex sacris literis exponunt?——Ubinam igitur sunt tot & tantæ fraudes & nundinationes omnium Religionum sacerdotum, & eorum qui sacris præsunt

not yet perceive any great danger there is of it; except it be from that very Quarter from whence all the Clamour comes. Indeed, if *Deism* should once spread among the *Laity*, it may in time insinuate it self farther; and then probably *Priest-craft* may be the Consequence: For, the most noted Masters of that *Craft* (such for Instance as Pope *Leo* the Xth.) have been shrewdly suspected to have been *Deists* or *Infidels* in masquerade, by some loose Sayings which they dropp'd. The Sons of *Eli* before mention'd, as infamous for *Priest-craft*, were *Sons of Belial*, they *knew not the Lord*^k: They were practical Infidels, if not more. Wherever there is most *Infidelity*, there in all likelihood will be the most *Craft* and *Guile* of every kind. Men that seriously *fear God*, and reverence *Sacred Writ*, will of course abhor both *Priest-craft*, and *Antipriest-craft*:

præfunt, & unquam aut usquam præfuerunt, ne quidem exceptis *Judæis*, *Christianis*, & *Reformatis* (qui redivivi sunt Christiani) ab *Adeisdæmone* tam confidenter decantatæ, & tam audacter exprobratæ? Nullibi, ut puto, exant, nisi in deliris Atheorum Cerebellis, & in Religionis Hostium scommatibus & convitiis. *Fay's Defens. Relig. contr. Toland.* p. 60, 61.

^k 1 Sam. ii. 12.

But

But *Infidels*, in a sacerdotal Capacity, or out of it, may be prepared for any *cunning Craftiness* whatever. Therefore, I say, the introducing and propigating of *Infidelity* is the likeliest Means to bring in *Priest-craft*. The same thing is further evident in another View: *Indifference* to all Religions saps the Principles of the *Reformation*, and tends to prepare Men equally, either for *no Religion*, or for any *corrupt Religion* that may offer. Besides, all *Confusion* and *Distraction* in Religion amongst us, weakens the *Protestant Interest*; and whatever that loses, another Interest gains. So that *Infidelity* in this Light, can serve only to pave the way for the return of antiquated *Superstitions*, and to bring *Priestcraft* in again at a Back-door. Consistent Men these all the while! to be perpetually declaiming against *Priest-craft*, and at the same time labouring to the utmost (knowingly, or ignorantly) to introduce it. To be short, the only sure way to keep out *Priest-craft*, is to exclude *Infidelity*; to reverence the *Bible*; to support a *Protestant Government*, and a *Protestant Clergy*; to esteem those of the Clergy that honour God, and deserve well of their Function; and when
any

any of them misbehave, either to cover their Faults, or to prosecute them in legal form, that so all *Scandals* may be put away from us.

7. The Seventh and last Article of Impeachment against the Christian Religion, is that of *Imposture*: An odious Charge, a compendious Calumny, all Reproaches in one. I need not be long in answering it, having in a great measure anticipated my self already under the former Heads. That there is an *Imposture* somewhere, is very certain: And the only Question is, Who are the *Impostors*? Reckon up the *Marks* and *Characters* of an *Imposture*¹: Apply them, first, to *Christ* and

¹ They are reckoned up by Dr. *Prideaux*, as follows.

1. That it must always have for its *End* some carnal Interest.
2. That it can have none but *wicked* Men for the Authors of it.
3. That Both these must appear in the very *texture* of the *Imposture* itself.
4. That it can never be so framed, but that it must contain some palpable *Falsities*, which shall discover the Falsity of the rest.
5. That wherever it is first propagated, it must be done by *Craft* and *Fraud*.
6. That when intrusted with many Conspirators, it can never be long concealed.
7. That it can never be establish'd, unless back'd with Force and Violence. *Prideaux*, *Letter to Deists*, p. 7.

his Doctrine and Followers, and see whether they will fit ; and next apply them to *Hobbs*, *Spinoza*, &c. and their Doctrines and Followers ; and see whether they will not fit. What can we think of Men who set themselves up, in the Name of God, *uncalled*, and as *rival-teachers* to *Moses* and the *Prophets*, to *Christ* and his *Apostles* : who recommend their own loose Systems in the room of *God's Word*, and substitute their Reveries in the place of the *Bible* : whose *Religion* is no body knows what, because it is to be what every Man shall carve out for himself, by his own *internal Light* ; and likely to be as *various* as Mens Capacities, Tempers, Circumstances, or Faces : whose *Morality*, short and superficial at the best, is further defective as wanting a proper *Authority* to support it, and *Sanctions* ^m to bind it, and so is next to no *Morality*; and whose

^m. It is doubtful whether those Gentlemen, many of them, admit any *future State* at all. To say nothing of *Acosia*, or other single Writers that absolutely rejected it, the *Pantheists* (who are thought to make the most considerable Body) plainly discard it, if we may judge from their own Systems. *Ut omnium rerum nobis Initium ortus attulit, sic adseret mors exitum : ut horum nihil ad nos ante ortum pertinuit, sic nihil post mortem pertinebit.* Pantheisticon, p. 71. Some that seem to admit a future State, yet plainly reject future *Penalties*. See two Letters

whose *Virtue* is little more than an *Idea*, or a dead and empty Name ⁿ. Whose *God* is either *universal Nature* (no *God* at all, in any proper Sense ^o) or else a kind of *Epicurean* Deity, tied up from interposing at all by *Miracles*, and from issuing out any *positive* Laws, and from making any Rule or Order in things *indifferent* here, and from doing *exemplary* Justice upon Sinners hereafter : For such his vindictive *Justice* is profanely miscalled, or misconstrued, *Spite, Wrath, Malice, Revenge, Tyranny* ^p, and the like. As *Epicurus's* principal Aim, after courteously acknowledging a *Deity*, was to divest him of his Rule and Governance, and to *disarm* him of his *Terrors* ^q ; so Modern

Letters from a Deist to his Friend, p. 2. 17, 19. The Author of *Christianity as old, &c.* declares against all future Penalties, but such as shall be for the *Amendment* of the Party (Ch. iv.) which may amount to declaring against all, unless he admits a *Purgatory* ; which he has not yet mentioned. He declares also against Punishment having any *retrospect*, because *what is past cannot be helped* (Second Address, p. 7.) which, in effect, is declaring against all proper *Punishment* for Sins ; and is exempting the *obstinate* and *incurable*, who most deserve Punishment, from being punish'd at all.

ⁿ See *Scripture-vindicated*, Part II. p. 139, &c. Second Edit.

^o See *Wollaston's* Religion of Nature delineated, p. 76.

^p See *Christianity as old*, p. 38, 42.

^q Tu denique, *Epicure*, Deum inermem facis, omnia illi tela,

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omnem

dern *Deism* evidently centers in the same design, and differs only in a few slight Circumstances, as to the manner of pursuing it.

Now, what is all this wild Doctrine, this Compound of Profaneness and Absurdities, (so solemnly delivered out in the Face of the World,) but a *Fraud* and Imposition upon the Publick, a *Cheat* upon the Populace, a formal *Imposture* ¹? And if I be not very much mistaken, it is an Imposture of a more *pernicious* Nature, and of a more *fatal* Tendency (were it possible it should ever prevail) than any other noted Imposture whatsoever, ancient or modern. *Mahometism*, *Paganism*, and *paganized* Christianity, amidst a great deal of Rubbish, have yet retained the prime Fundamentals of *Virtue* and *Godliness*; viz. the

omnem detraxisti *Potentiam*; & ne cuiquam metuendus esset, projecisti Illum extra motum. Hunc igitur insepultum ingenti quodam & inexplicabili muro, divisumque a contactu, & a conspectu mortalium, non habes quare verearis: nulla Illi nec tribuendi, nec nocendi materia est. *Seneca de Benef.* l. iv. c. 19. p. 436.

¹ Cæterum, ut olim obtrectatoribus Ethnicis *imposturas* Christianismo objicientibus, reponebat *Origenes* (Lib. vi. contr. Celsum) Ipsos *impostores* esse omnium maximos; ad eundem modum & nos in novos illos Philosophos [*Hobbium*, *Spinosam*, &c.] hanc faciem retorquemus, *Fraudumque* eos & *Imposturarum* postulamus. *Kortholt.* de tribus Impostoribus Magnis, p. 3, 4.

Belief

Belief of a *God* and a *Providence*, the *Immortality* of the *Soul*, and a *future Judgment*, together with *eternal Rewards* and *Punishments* : But *Infidelity*, or modern *Deism*, (which is little else but revived *Epicurism*, *Sadducism*, and *Zendickism*) is so exceeding loose upon the Heads aforementioned, that one knows not what solid Foundation it leaves, or whether any, for *Virtue* and *Godliness* to rest upon. In this View therefore, it must appear the most *pernicious* Imposture that the World has yet known.

Then as to the *Method* of promoting it, it is such as threatens the Destruction of all *Sincerity*, and common *Probity*. The Strength of it lies wholly in *Falsification*, *Stratagem*, and *Wile*. It cannot be *pleaded* for decently, without *disowning* it, verbally, at the same time, and without making it pass for the very reverse of what it really is. Never was there such an Abuse of good *Words*, or such a Misapplication of *bad ones*, in any other Cause, nor ever will be. *Truth*, *Reason*, *Morality*, *Virtue*, *natural Religion*, *internal Revelation*, *Christianity*, are all of them made Names or Titles for *Libertinism* and *Irreligion* ; while *Credulity*, *Bigotry*, &c. are made the Names for true *Religion* and *Godli-*

ness: Which is miscalling evil *good*, and good *evil*, in a detestable manner, and to a degree beyond Example. These things considered, I scruple not to repeat, that there never was a greater or a more unnatural *Imposture* offered to the World, than what is seen in modern *Deism*, or *Infidelity*.

I do not hereby intend to deny all *Degrees* in Infidelity, or to condemn all equally: The Infidel Schemes are various, and some worse than others. *Pantheism*, for Instance, and *Hobbism* are scandalously bad, scarce differing from the broadest *Atheism*: and *Fatalism*, in effect, is but little better. There may be modester Schemes than these. But yet take the best and most refined System of *Deism*, that either has been or can be invented, and what is it (in our present Circumstances) but the *Folly of Man*, set up in opposition to the *Wisdom of Heaven*? A confused Medley of jarring Sentiments, huddled up together blindly and presumptuously, *without God*, and *against God*: I mean no Reflection here upon *Natural Religion*; which (*abstracted* from revealed) after borrowing much from it) is an excellent thing^s,
and

* There are several good Systems of *Natural Religion*, but three more particularly, drawn up by three able Men, *Cumberland*, *Wilkins* and *Wells*: who all took a rational and consistent

and worthy of all Acceptation, so far as it goes. *Natural Religion*, and modern *Deism* are not the same Thing, but widely different. It were much to be wish'd, that *Deists* were *sincerely* in the Interests of *natural Religion*: They could not long be *Deists*, if they were. For, not to mention several other Considerations, I shall only observe here, that it is a clear and

consistent way, and such as must inevitably terminate, when properly pursued, in a serious Belief of divine Revelation. On the other hand, *Deism*, which rejects all divine Revelation, must as inevitably terminate, if *consistently* pursued, in downright *Atheism*; as Dr. Clarke has well shewn in his *Evidences of Natural and revealed Religion*, p. 19—33. 4th Edit.

One might be apt to expect, since the *Deists* talk so much of the *Perfection* of Natural Religion, that they should be willing at least to adopt the most *perfect* Systems of it, such as I have mentioned; rather than leave it to every Day-labourer to draw one out for himself. But they have reasons perhaps for not doing it. For,

1. The *Morality* in those Systems is so extensive, strict and pure, that they might almost as well be *Christians*, (in point of *Restraint*) as be obliged to submit to all the Rules there prescribed.

2. If they were once to admit such a Thread of clear and close Reasoning, and resolve to pursue it as far as it would carry them, they could not avoid being *Christians*. For, the Proofs of Christianity stand upon as clear a Foot as *natural Religion* it self does, especially in its remoter Branches: Besides that, the Law of *Nature*, or *Reason*, will now of Course take in *Revelation*, and make it one of its own Dictates.

3. The principal Aim and Design of the *Deists* would be defeated and frustrated, as it seems, were they to espouse any such *Certain Scheme*, that (should be admitted as) a *common Rule*

for

and self-evident dictate of *natural Religion*, to believe and embrace whatever God has *revealed*, or shall *reveal*, as soon as sufficient Proof shall be made of its being so. “ Whatever is “ immediately *revealed* from God, must, as “ well as any thing else, be treated as *what it is*; “ which it cannot be, if it is not treated with “ the *highest* Regard, *believed* and *obeyed*†.

I have now, my Reverend Brethren, run thro’ the several opprobrious Aspersions, and odious Imputations cast upon *Christianity*, endeavouring all the way to shew, not only that

for all Men. The three excellent Writers before named, intended one *common* invariable Rule, such as none should swerve from; But Infidelity appears to admit of no common and invariable System, but to affect an *independent, personal, various* Religion, according as every Man may fancy: [See *Literal Scheme*, p. 435.] And the Result will be, that every one shall be left to do *what seemeth him good in his own Eyes*. Which, perhaps, is the true reason, why every Man is to have the forming of the Rule to *himself*, by his own *internal Light*, without the Help of external Revelation from God, or Instruction from Men. See *Christianity as old, &c.* p. 277, 279, 280, 281, 295, 296, 305, 309, 379.

Upon the whole, *Deists* are neither for a *revealed* Religion, nor for a *natural* one, justly so called, but for as many *natural Religions*, as there are Men of different Circumstances and Abilities. They are for a *personal* Religion, of their *own* carving, or none: which is not espousing *Natural Religion*, in any proper Sense, but *Libertinism* only and *Irreligion*, under the Name of the Religion of Nature.

† Wollaston, p. 211.

they

they are wrongfully charged upon Christians, but that they are, for the most part, *justly* chargeable upon the Accusers themselves; who have been sending their Readers upon a false pursuit after *Credulity*, *Bigotry*, &c. where they are not, only to turn their Eyes off from observing where they really are. True Religion will ever shine, whether considered in it self, or compared with the mis-shapen Schemes set up against it: And those who are not yet duly apprized of its *absolute* Value, may yet perceive enough of its *comparative* Excellency over *Infidelity*; as a Man that doubts even of true Coin, may know a plain Counterfeit when he sees it, and may be certain of thus much at least, that one is no way comparable to the other.

I shall only add, that if we take a Survey of Mankind in former Ages, we shall find, that tho' they had the same Inclinations to *Ease* and *Pleasure* as We may now have, and the same Aversion to *Restraints*; and tho' they were as willing to get rid of the terrible Apprehensions of *God*, and a *World to come*, as any of us now can be; yet so strong were the Impressions of Religion every where, that *Infidelity* could not maintain its Ground, even in the darkest Times of *Paganism*: Much less
can

can it be able to do it now. Or supposing it might, yet what could its Patrons expect to gain by it in conclusion, after once the wanton humour should go round, but to fall, with others, in the universal Ruin? In the mean while, it is observable, that they are themselves, in some measure, sensible of the *use of Religion*, as often as their own Liberty, Property or Reputation is concerned, and they then claim with some Earnestness the *Benefits* of it; condemning others as profane, wicked, or impious (Words without *Sense*, or however without *Force*, upon their Principles) who are but suspected to treat them wrongfully. It is only when they consider themselves as *Actors*, that Religion appears so grievous a *Restraint*; for when they look upon themselves as *Sufferers*, it is as great a *Relief*: And then That Religion, which at other times is ill thought of, as an Enemy to *Liberty*, is found to be the best and surest Friend to it. To conclude, since their *Licentious* Principles are condemn'd absolutely by all Mankind but themselves, and by themselves also at times, and in particular Circumstances; more needs not be said to shew, how erroneous and pernicious they are, and how justly odious in the sight both of God and Man.

F I N I S.

E R R A T A.

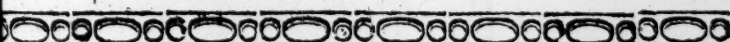
Page 10. line 23. read *aliquid*.

Page 16. line 21. read *a parentibus*.

Page 20. line 5. read *doctrinæ*.

Page 24. line 21. read *Impostors*.

Page 70. line 4. read *propagating*.



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